



# Living Healthy Working Well

## Alcohol and Drugs— Use or Abuse?

### **How does someone become alcohol and drug dependent?**

A lot of research has been done, but no one knows why some people can use alcohol and drugs and not become dependent, while others cannot. Some research has shown that alcohol and drug abuse runs in families. Other research shows that people who are always around alcohol or drugs, such as those in high crime areas, may also be more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs. Another study suggests that some people seem to have stronger reactions to certain alcohol and drugs, while others do not. Whether a person is dependent on cigarettes, alcohol, cocaine, heroin, or any other drug, he or she could benefit from professional help in order to deal with the many issues linked to alcohol and drug use.

### **Alcohol and drug abuse among teens is a growing concern**

Spotting the signs of a teen alcoholic can mean the difference between life and death. Approximately three million teens are alcoholics. Teens today are starting to drink at an earlier age than ever. And the earlier a person starts abusing substances, the higher the likelihood that he or she will become addicted. Relatives and friends should learn to recognize the signs of a teenager who may be using drugs or alcohol and get help.

### **Warning signs to look for**

- Missing days or poor performance at school
- Loss of interest in after school activities
- Changing to a different group of friends
- Having a fake I.D.
- Family member with a history of alcohol abuse
- Sudden mood swings
- Spending money without a reason

### **If a family member has an alcohol or drug abuse problem, you can get help**

Many people with an alcohol or drug problem want help, but don't know where to turn. Others may not understand the effect the problem is having on their life and the family circle. Sometimes showing a loved one that you care may help them see the negative effect alcohol or drug abuse has had on their life. If you do not feel comfortable talking to the person directly, talk to your primary care physician or a mental health professional about your concerns and the best way to help your loved one. They can help you better understand the problem and provide suggestions on how you can help.

Also, support groups such as Al-Anon help people who have loved ones with an alcohol or drug abuse problem. Even if your loved one is not ready to get help, you can learn how to deal with alcohol or drug abuse in your family. Support groups are located throughout the country. Look in the telephone directory to locate a support group in your area.

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## What to do if you think you have an alcohol or drug problem

It is never too late to get help for an alcohol or drug abuse problem. The first step is admitting that you have a problem and you want to get control of your life. Then it is time to seek the help of others. Often, family and friends have the same concerns and can provide a lot of support. Alcoholics Anonymous and other programs can be very helpful. Talk to your primary care physician or a mental health professional about the effect alcohol or drugs is having on your life. They can help you decide what the best care is for you and how to get help.

## Unsure if you have a problem?

Think about the questions below:

- Is drinking or drug use causing problems in your home life?
- Is drinking or drug use causing problems at work?
- Do you drink or use drugs to escape your problems?
- Have you ever felt bad after drinking or using drugs?

If you can answer 'yes' to any of these questions, you may have a drinking or drug problem. You should contact a substance abuse professional for an evaluation and, if necessary, treatment.



## Drug and alcohol abuse affect millions of people in America

Did you know...

- Alcohol and drug abuse is not caused by low morals or a lack of willpower
- Both men and women suffer from alcohol and drug abuse
- Alcohol and drug abuse affect people from all different backgrounds and social levels
- Alcohol and drug use are a big concern on college campuses across the country
- Children as young as grade school abuse alcohol and other drugs
- Alcohol and drug abuse are problems that can be helped with counseling and support

## Common warning signs of abuse

- Problems at work such as lateness, poor performance, and missing days
- A rise in how much and how often alcohol and drugs are used
- Being irritable when others comment on a person's alcohol and drug use
- Not taking care of responsibilities such as caring for children/pets, and not paying household bills
- Body tremors
- Legal problems related to alcohol and drug use, such as drinking and driving

## Remember . . .

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to you and your eligible dependents. EAP counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to discuss your concerns and provide confidential assistance at no cost to you. Just call us at 1-800-6-EAP-4-CA (1-800-632-7422). If you are using a TTY, please call 1-800-542-2833. As part of your EAP, you now have access to MagellanAssist. Visit today at <http://www.dpa.ca.gov/benefits/other/eap/Assist.shtm>